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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB
NEW DEHLI PASS TO LEGATT

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TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [MARR](#) [PHUM](#) [MOPS](#) [BM](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: GOB REFORMING BANGLADESH RIFLES BORDER GUARDS, TO
CHARGE MUTINEERS BY OCTOBER

REF: DHAKA 533 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador James Moriarty for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) The Government of Bangladesh (GOB) should conclude its investigation of the February 2009 Bangladesh Rifles border guard (BDR) mutiny by October, according to Commerce Minister LTC (ret.) Faruq Khan, who is charged with coordinating the investigation (reftel). Khan told the Ambassador on August 24 that the GOB was completely revamping the BDR and redeploying the BDR and other armed forces to address "troubling activities" along the Burmese border and to stop Indian militants from entering Bangladesh near Sylhet.

BDR Mutiny Investigation Almost Complete

2. (C) Khan predicted the GOB would complete its investigation of the February 2009 BDR mutiny and move ahead with the "legal phase" by October. According to Khan, the GOB had debated which law to apply to prosecute the offenders; the military argued the penalties under the Bangladesh Rifles Act were too weak, while others worried that using military courts would invite accusations that the defendants were railroaded. To blunt inevitable criticisms from both sides, Khan said, the GOB had asked the Supreme Court to decide which legal framework would be appropriate under the circumstances. Khan anticipated the Supreme Court would provide its judgment before its end of August recess.

BDR Reform Will Address Core Issues

3. (C) Khan said the BDR would continue to act as Bangladesh's "first line of defense" in the event of a conventional war and to control movement of people and goods across the border. Otherwise, everything from the BDR name to command structure would be changed, Khan predicted, and the BDR rank-and-file would receive better pay and promotion opportunities. To address the BDR's immediate personnel shortage (exacerbated by the loss of as many 3,000 personnel Khan anticipated would be prosecuted for the mutiny), the GOB would invite retired military officers and enlisted men to take short-term assignments with the BDR. As a long-term solution, about 20 percent of the BDR officer billets would be set aside for deserving BDR rank-and-file and warrant officers. This step would address the complaint, an underlying cause of the mutiny, that the BDR was led exclusively by Bangladesh Army officers with no institutional

stake in the BDR's well-being.

Improve BDR Effectiveness;
Focus on Burma and Sylhet Frontiers

14. (C) Khan explained the GOB planned to improve the BDR's effectiveness by, for example, purchasing motorcycles so BDR elements could better patrol remote stretches of the long Indian frontier. BDR forces would focus more on the Indian border adjacent to Sylhet in the Northeast where, Khan said, "Indian militanQ" had been sneaking into Bangladesh. Khan reported that the GOB would redeploy two BDR battalions to the Burmese frontier because the GOB had received "intelligence reports about troubling activities on the Burmese side of the border."

Comment: BDR Rising from the Ashes?

15. (C) The GOB's savvy decision to let the Supreme Court decide how to prosecute the mutineers will blunt inevitable criticisms that the GOB is being too lenient or hasty in punishing alleged mutineers. Rebirth of the BDR, regarded by Bangladeshis as corrupt and ineffective at border control, would advance U.S. efforts to combat terrorism and organized crime in Bangladesh and the region. We look forward to the PACOM-led interagency assessment team that will visit in late-September to look at ways the U.S. can assist with BDR reform.
MORIARTY